

Preface

This book grows out of the work of my PhD research, presented and discussed at the University of Lancaster, UK, in May-July 2012. In this work the relationship between text, semantics and culture is addressed by assessing various computational procedures of semantic analysis. More specifically, the analysis of two words in British English – *chocolate* and *wine* – and their denotationally comparable terms in Italian (*cioccolato/a*, *cioccolatino/i*) provides the opportunity to test different types of data, sampling procedures, coding methods, and a set of cultural theories in the identification of the cultural associations of those terms.

As the subtitle of the book clarifies, the goal of the present work is methodological, namely the development of a viable corpus linguistics method for distinguishing cultural associations of a given word from personal mental associations. To this end, an interdisciplinary approach was adopted. The theoretical framework for this work draws on several disciplines that study culture through language, though from different perspectives, namely corpus linguistics, cultural studies, marketing, anthropology and psychology, with a focus on their shared elements relevant to the goal of the present research. This was considered necessary in order to make the method applicable outside linguistics. However, the book presents a linguistic piece of research and addresses a perspective audience of linguists.

The work accomplishes two main goals. First, from a cultural perspective, it selects a cultural framework – cultural systems theories – that lends itself to computational semantic analysis, and develops a computational procedure for distinguishing the mental associations anchored in culture from those which are not.

Second, from a methodological perspective, the quantitative comparisons performed between the entire datasets (both elicited and Web-based) on the one hand, and smaller samples of the data on the other, show, in this particular context, to what extent findings based on smaller data samples are generalisable to the whole database the samples come from, thus adding useful pieces of information to our general knowledge in corpus linguistics.

In sum, this book, makes a foray into a multidisciplinary approach to the study of corpora, culture and semantics and provides researchers involved in (cross)cultural analysis with theoretical as well as practical ideas for a user-friendly corpus analysis of cultural associations.

